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grad roots

FALL 2023
No. 2

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grassroots campus notes

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What is Grad Roots?

Grad Roots is a self published, independently circulated, small magazine (aka “zine”) originally created in Fall 2023 as a platform for graduate students and recent alumni to share their experiences surviving UW-Madison’s administration and culture as a whole. They chose print media as a more direct mode of expression after being disenfranchised first in their workplaces, and then in the Teaching Assistants Association– both of which police, exhaust, and stifle student labor organizing.

Anyone may share content through this zine regardless of (un)employment category or academic rank. The goal is for each zine to be immediately useful, politically provocative, and emotionally honest for all people wishing to resist toxic academia and build community power. You are free to submit any writing or works of art for publication without regard for quality, be they doodles or half-finished thoughts, to **gradrootsmadison@gmail.com**

TABLE of CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Newsflash!	2
↳ news bulletin	
<i>So You Have A Conference In Florida</i>	3
↳ text guide	
<i>Guide to Quiet Quitting part 2</i>	5
↳ text guide	
<i>Free Air Purifiers!</i>	6
↳ QR code to guide	
<i>Monthly Lab Cleanup</i>	7
↳ text guide	
<i>Abolish Prisons Everywhere</i>	9
↳ poster	
<i>Help Support the Palestinian Cause</i>	12
↳ guide + request from local orgs	
<i>Empowering and Uplifting</i>	14
↳ comic	
<i>“Weingarten Rights”</i>	15
↳ legal dive	
<i>How to Start An Effective Group part 1</i>	17
↳ text guide	



Newsflash!

A LOT has happened on campus since the last zine press, but the following events were reported by independent union activists to Grad Roots:

- ▶ **TAs won \$283 in ILS and \$1,000 in Bacteriology** to design subject-relevant lesson plans that guided their undergrads in building NIH-approved DIY air filtration boxes for classroom respiratory health.
- ▶ Some **English** grads wrote a letter about how their administrators cajole and coerce them out of outside appointments and into TAships.
- ▶ **Astronomy** faculty downplayed a professor's pro-Zionist reply to an international graduate student mourning loved ones in Palestine. He responded with a teach-in on Palestinian history & resistance and drew excellent turnout.
- ▶ In **Entomology**, one faculty member's entire graduate workforce switched labs as a coordinated action against his persistent poor mentorship and sexism. The grads were able to retain all their funding partly thanks to the invaluable help of another Entomology faculty member
- ▶ **Geography** grad students organized a public talk on Cop City. Turnout was excellent.
- ▶ In **Neuroscience**, "Free Palestine" posters were removed without permission from a graduate student's personal lab space.
- ▶ **MDTP** students pushed for a gift fund to cover fees; 50% of international students have received aid for fall semester fees (aiming for all to receive it soon). Also, MDTP students no longer need to TA for the labor-intensive undergrad microbio lab after they advocated for better TA conditions.
- ▶ **Free Diaper Distribution Program** volunteers quit due to TAA's culture of burnout and TAA Officer hostility after volunteers refused to use the Program for optics or recruitment.
- ▶ **TAA's** parent org AFT-W chastised members seeking cheaper dues at the October General Meeting. November turnout dwindled, barely reaching 30 of 400 members.
- ▶ The **Madison Police Department** provided heavy security detail for a Neo-Nazi rally, little-to-none for the numerous Palestine Liberation rallies.



So you have a conference in Florida

Many U.S. states are not only politically treacherous but also pose serious safety risks for people in certain marginalized groups, e.g. trans people. For example, Florida legislation allows paramedics to refuse medical care to trans patients, which is alarming for any trans academics whose fields are planning conferences in that state. Are you a gay, trans, or allied graduate student and are wondering how to stand up against academic societies in such a situation, beyond boycotting the conference? Here's one example currently in progress, as well as some talking points to refute the excuses that professors or societies will give when called upon to move the conference in lieu of the risk.

Current Example

Using posters to disrupt and take up space in an uncanceled conference

This year, the American Epileptic Society conference is going to be in Florida. Event organizers claimed to be unable to move the conference. As a disabled trans graduate student, I felt unsafe going to the conference: however, I was able to network with fellow queer scientists and graduate students to disrupt the conference and make sure that the effects of its location were felt by the white, cis-het people who had planned it.

Our plan is to take up poster space with large mostly blank posters, with statements such as, GAY, WELCOME TRANS SCIENTIST, BLACK TRANS LIVES MATTER, etc. These posters will **a) take up space, b) disrupt the conference, and c) make people uncomfortable.**

RESPONSES TO ACADEMICS WHO DEFEND A CONFERENCES INABILITY TO MOVE LOCATIONS:

It's too big to move!!	If we avoid every state with bad politics, we wouldn't be able to have a conference anywhere!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When will the safety concern be either serious enough or affect enough people for the conference to move?• If never, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is not political: we are addressing the real safety concerns of participants.
These conferences are decided 10 years in advance! It's too late to move now!	It's inappropriate for publicly funded institutions to take a political stance!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They didn't force people to attend in 2020 even though its location was also decided in advance. In fact, they cancelled it on short notice.• If never, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Again, this is not a political stance: we are addressing real safety concerns, such as the ability of certain members to access health care.
You'll be safe inside the conference! Its only a few days!	It's such a big change for so few people!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disabled trans people are more likely to incur illness or require medical attention during travel.• Have you ever gotten sick on vacation? Did you need medical care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What number or percentage of people must be affected before you will accommodate their safety?• If never, why?

The above can also apply to abortion rights and other real concerns that are primarily safety related, but have been unjustly politicized!

Beyond this, you might try organizing department-wide boycotts of conferences in areas unsafe to marginalized groups. These places do not deserve our money.

If you feel you have to go to the conference, additional disruptive techniques suggested by friends of mine included but are not limited to: using a portion of your talk to address the safety issues present due to the location. Naming your talk something that addresses the safety concerns of the location. The one thing I urge you **not to do** something passive and guilt-assuaging, such as buttons or nothing.

To get in touch with me or our fellow community organizers reach out to.
jenniferlkoehler18@gmail.com

How to quiet quit in your teaching - advice from an expert (Part II)

This is the second entry in a series. Read the Part I in the previous issue of Grad Roots:

<https://archive.org/details/gradroots-1>

To recap from last Part I: teaching conditions look different in each discipline, so we are building a bank of strategies for "quiet quitting" - how to free yourself as a teacher. TAs passionate about teaching will be glad to know that many successful methods to reduce teaching labor choose abolitionist pedagogy. This includes minimizing numerical grading; ending punitive attendance and extension rules; and challenging the academic bureaucracy (which is carceral in nature). Try subverting these structures in your teaching practice, especially if you are uncomfortable with rule-breaking.

Here are more tips for quiet-quitting your teaching:

- **Spend as little time as possible on grading**, and use ethical grading methods (contract grading, etc.) If you haven't read [any of the literature on contract grading](#), do so—you owe it to your students to understand the way that the University's default grading methods do consistent, deliberate violence to students without family wealth and students of Color. Letter grading is primarily a way for the University to triage financial aid for students with "merit," which due to [systemic inequalities](#) in Wisconsin's educational system are very likely to be white and non-GSM. Most lecturers do not closely review final grades, and you are not obligated to input final grades which match those on Canvas.
- **Do not enforce UW's academic honesty policies**. UW's choice to punish students through their academic honesty policies has a [disproportionate impact on low income and PoC students](#), who are more likely to be policed for perceived academic honesty violations even by well-intentioned instructors (one can draw an obvious analogy here between the way "good" cops participate in the police state). For alternatives to the traditional plagiarism paradigm, see [this journal article](#) on incorporating a patchwriting-centered methodology in the classroom.
- **Act disorganized to create confusion**. This protects you because short-term disorganization cannot be punished or overridden like outright disagreement with unfair policies. Only offer partial records if they will be used to create more work for you; perform your own overwork, and promise loudly to fulfill your supervisor's demands but never follow up; and delay until the grading deadline if necessary
- **Practice your boundaries around illness & days not teaching**, and create a precedent of logging off after hours/when sick. Practice disregarding your supervisor's opinions about how to behave when sick: send that email when it's too late to pressure you/your colleagues into teaching the class, and pretend not to see the response. Model self- and community care for your students, who should also rest when sick
- **Don't ask for permission**. UW-Madison fosters a culture of fear and of following the letter of the law. If you ask your instructor for permission, they will instinctively ask for permission from administrators (D█████Z█████ in particular) above them, whose job it is to enforce violent anti-worker policies from upper UW administration. These administrators will tell you not to do it, making it even harder to go behind their backs. Prevent this cycle from ever happening! Then...
- **Feign ignorance**. Even if your time-saving self-defense pedagogy is noticed by a supervisor, most consequences can be avoided with an ardent apology and profession of ignorance.

Submit your own quiet-quitting tips! BadgerMutualAidNetwork@gmail.com

WIN A
FREE
AIR PURIFIER!*



← scan
here

* some assembly required

Does your PI refuse to hire a lab manager?

Try : monthly lab cleaning + lab lunch days!

Once a month, my lab dedicates a Friday afternoon to a few hours (sometimes a whole day) of lab cleaning/management/upkeep and then we eat a late lunch afterwards! Here's what we do:

- We make it known to our PI that we will be dedicating one day a month to lab cleaning.
 - This is important because: **it is now up to our PI to decide: are they ok with their employees spending research time on lab cleaning instead?**
- After cleaning, we pick a restaurant to eat at. This is a great opportunity to talk about our experiences in lab, and **support each other through workplace issues, which allows us to build community with each other.**

If you've been trying to find a way to build trust with your co-workers- this is a great start. **Resist against over-work and share a meal with your co-workers!**



Attention!

We interrupt your day with an opportunity to

Help end the genocide

Practice daily acts of political bravery + humanity

Take these simple, repeatable actions now!

Instructions:

1. *Visit the website ceasefiretoday.com and do as many of the actions you are able to. Hell, bookmark the website even.*
2. *Post the flyer on the back of this sheet where it will be most visible.*

Bonus: Photocopy the flyer and ask your friends and colleagues to help you flyer.

Advisory: Check your local policies on flyering/art posting, and do your best to avoid negative consequences for expressing yourself

Gently remove this poster from the staples

Please be careful for paper cuts!



AB's SNOWS SH

Memories



~~Free~~

FREE
PALESTINE!

STOP COP
City!

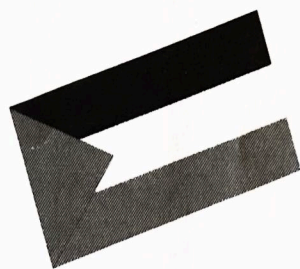


Learn More About Palestine

Decolonizepalestine.com

Books

- The Hundred Year on Palestine (2020)
by Rashid Khalidi
- Freedom is a Constant Struggle (2015)
by Angela Davis
- The Question of Palestine (1992)
by Edward W. Said



Local

- @Madison4Pali
- @SJPUWMadison

News Sources/ Instagrams

- Mintpress @Mintpress
- Samidoun Network @SamidounNetwork
- Palestine Action @Pal_action
- Electronic Intifada @ElectronicIntifada
- Metras Global @Metras_Global
- Motaz Azaiza @Motaz_azaiza
- Bisan @Wizard_BisanI
- Reem Abdellatif @Reem.Abdellatif
- Nooh AL-Shaghnoobi @Nooh.xp

Your Taxes Pay
For Genocide &
Imprisonment.

Liberation
Of Palestine
Is Liberation
For all People!

Movies

- The Present (2020)
- Gaza Fights For Freedom (2019)
- arabfilminstitute.org/palestinian-voices/



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SUPPORT THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE?



@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

01

PARTICIPATE IN THE BDS MOVEMENT: BOYCOTT, DIVEST, AND SANCTION

Boycott companies that fund apartheid. Do not purchase products from McDonalds, Coca Cola, Disney, Puma, etc

@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

02

CALL YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Demand your reps call for a ceasefire, end the funneling of our tax dollars towards genocide, and call for an end to the occupation

@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

03

SUPPORT PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Attend their events, amplify their voices, and spread their social media content on your own platforms

@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

04

SHOW OUT TO PROTESTS AND DISRUPTIVE ACTIONS

Mass mobilization is one of the most effective tactics in showing the world our power as a collective. Your attendance matters.

@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

05

KEEP POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Continue reposting infographics, news updates, actionable steps, etc. Repost, share, like, and engage with content on Palestine—like this one!

@WEWILLRETURNPALESTINE

Act Now Against These Companies Profiting from the Genocide of the Palestinian People

Consumer boycott targets: 	Divestment targets: 
Pressure (NON-BOYCOTT) targets: 	Organic boycott targets: 

+ Starbucks!

How to support Palestiine?

Disrupt business as usual! How?

**1) Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS).
Boycott the above brands! Support
local businesses, even better if
they're Palestinian!**



**2) Show up to your local actions!
Follow: @madison4pali on Instagram
and sign up for their email (scan QR)
for the quickest notifications of calls
to action!**



WHAT THE WHITE DUDE LABOR BRO SAYS ABOUT TAA:



TAA is historic and important! They're your insurance- the reason you have rights. You should join!

WHAT ALL THE PEOPLE TAKEN LESS SERIOUSLY SAY ABOUT TAA:

That parent union AFT takes all their money and does what? It's awful, sexist, abusive

I went to a meeting. It was ok I guess... I don't want to cause a fuss.

I remember the race-faking TAA president. That was only in 2020. So yeah: I wouldn't trust them

TAA has never done anything in all the time I been here. What are they doing with all that money?

Bruh why is it always so tense?

My old union was not like that at all. I don't think they know

Yeah, TAA's great. What have they done lately? Oh. Uh, well, I'm not sure... but it's the only way the working class will-

TAA? What's that?

What's that?

Why does the parent union keep hiring people who date UFA's and TAA leadership? Isn't that really inappropriate?

Why is it so white?

I worked with TAA on their campaign... I don't really organize anymore.

They said they would help me

I can't afford their dues

Demasiado privilegio, no?

Yeah, TAA sucks... but we can improve it?

I was an officer for a while. I don't want to talk about it.

strike? I can't trust these rich kids for that

Robert's rules is racist... what are these people so procedural?

They didn't listen

Never heard of them

they play nice with shitty admin

What time of grad has time to play bureaucracy

I have kids to feed

grads in my dept don't trust them

they just smile and nod a lot

They co-opt movements and slowed us down

TAA officers recently told me that **ONLY** their members have "Weingarten rights" — the right to have a colleague join you in a meeting with your supervisor.

So I looked into it! This isn't legal advice, just relevant laws/statutes. It turns out that Weingarten rights are held by the person, not the union, so you don't need a union to assert them. See this case:



WISCONSIN LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION,
LOCAL 2 vs. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM
Case 32 No. 67203 PP(S)-384. Decision No.
32239-B

The court ultimately ruled that "the University...had interfered with a unit member's rights by directing her not to talk with anyone other than her union or legal representative about an incident under investigation for misconduct."

<http://werc.wi.gov/decisions/32239-B.pdf>

In that case, they used Wisconsin Statute III.82 to apply Weingarten rights to public employees:

"111.82 Rights of employees. Employees have the right of self-organization and the right to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing under this subchapter, and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection..."

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/111/v/82>

And the statute **DOES** say we are Employees:

Statute 111.81(7)(b) classifies "(b) Program, project or teaching assistants employed by the University of Wisconsin System" as employees! Research assistants are classified as employees under 111.81(7)(gm).

Now you know! There are other statutes & laws that may also support that right, such as:

20 U.S. code sections 152(2) and (3).

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/152>

So you **CAN** bring a colleague with you when meeting your supervisor. They can sit with you, take notes, and ask questions. It's not weird to tell your supervisor you're doing this: having someone there to support **You** adds helpful structure for everyone. ♥

This is a strategy for groups of graduate students to introduce collective action into their daily lives and relationships, so that coordinating with *other* groups of students begins to feel sustainable and natural. Academics often instinctively try to replace humanity with bureaucratic machinery, only to realize that they have tired out their colleagues and themselves and that their movement is over before it has begun. It is when a group of grad students finds collective action *itself* rejuvenating and effortless that they can honestly say they've introduced collective power into their group's culture.

Consider this guide a type of cultural exercise regimen. When formalizing into a certified labor union becomes available and advantageous, your larger network of activists, organizers, and leaders will be ready and *excited* to drop what you're doing in order to fight for the community of graduate workers you've grown to love. This approach is inspired by years of diverse experiences, the many resources that my own group relies on,¹⁻⁹ and it is how the largest education strikes in the country have won and approved contract agreements with over 95% consensus of workers.^{10,11}

——What does an effective group do?——

- ★ At the interpersonal scale: all individuals regularly check-in about each other's well-being; whether their personal needs are being met; and for help following through on plans. They offer and receive help frequently.

Relationships may take whatever shape the individuals find appropriate: they may be classmates, professional collaborators, friends, partners, neighbors, whatever. However, the free exchange of help and aid is critical to building relationships strong enough to confront authority together.
- ★ At the group scale: group members regularly plan and execute “structure tests”, e.g. tests for group responsiveness to calls to action; group resilience against intimidation; group power to force a policy/structural change; etc.

One such test is a *sit-in*, in which the group sits in an obstructive location in a space, aiming to draw attention to a cause while disrupting activities that would otherwise typically occur within the space they occupy. One might consider a “lab sit-in” successful if all group members show up; if regular business is halted for a day; or if nobody was harmed or retaliated against; etc.

A structure test may test multiple things or have several goals. Its scope or simplicity is up to you. Regardless, group structure tests empower the group with self-knowledge while building valuable skills and trust in one's community.
- ★ Each group member has a daily routine of actions and behaviors that serve their personal and political values. This includes, e.g. healthy mindfulness, rest, play, and work habits.

When you introduce intentional practices that follow your principles at the habitual level, you make progress towards your goals in ways that cost you less energy. This makes

the rest of your political action more sustainable, especially when the behaviors you choose are informed by your group's strategies and power structure analyses.

- ★ All group members intentionally share to the group their political and personal values; their goals for material change; their current daily practices and plans of action to attain those goals; whose help that may require; and how personally satisfied they are with their current and collective progress.

This step draws deep self-reflection and conflict at personal, interpersonal, and group scales. Generative conflict facilitates value alignment between people from dramatically different cultures, while inspiring more creativity and healthier communication.

- ★ The group must have a chill, transformative process for conflict resolution and accountability at both personal and collective scales. Any of these list items may involve fun, but I've found fun to be an especially important part of conflict resolution in academic labor activism.

For example, after one group member endangered me by unintentionally snitching: he and I exchanged hurt words, we apologized, and then had a nice visit to the farmer's market. The group introduced new practices to improve our security culture, and members supported us individually as well so we never felt isolated throughout the conflict.

—References—

1. "[Community Organizing Guide](#)" by Neighborhood Anarchist Collective
2. "No Shortcuts" by Jane McAlevey
3. "Emergent Strategy" by adrienne maree brown
4. "Power Mapping and Analysis" by Anita Tang
5. "Mutual Aid" compiled by Josie Sparrow
6. "Approaches to Organising: Decentralised, Directed Network and Strike Circles Models" by Robyn Gulliver
7. "10 ways white supremacy wounds white people" by Greg Elliot
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9. "The Progressive Plantation: racism inside white radical social change groups" by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin
10. "Los Angeles Teachers' Strike: UTLA Organizing Solidarity." The Nation, 19 January 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/los-angeles-teachers-strike-utla-organizing-solidarity/>
11. "The LA Teachers' Strike with Alex Caputo-Pearl, Jane McAlevey, and Doug Henwood." Jacobin, 08 February 2019, <https://jacobin.com/2019/02/caputo-pearl-mcalevey-henwood-interview-la-teachers-strike>

YOU CARRY POWER WITH YOUR WISDOM, YOUR STRUGGLES,
YOUR PLEASURES, + YOUR CULTURE. SHARE THEM PROUDLY
WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.

COLLECTIVE CARE

IS THE FUTURE



THIS PUBLICATION IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY ACADEMICS
FROM UW-MADISON. READ IT, USE IT,
SHARE IT, ADD TO IT!

To submit text, artwork, questions, etc: GradRootsMadison@gmail.com